

Field trial bird house and parking area for campers and horse trailers. Field trial facilities occupy land that is no longer providing wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities or serving a grant related purpose.

Thus, in regard to the above finding, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the State are not in compliance with Sections 1 and 2 of the Wildlife Restoration Act, 50CFR80.13, 50CFR80.14, 50CFR80.18, 43CFR12.71(b), 521FW1.6, 521FW1.7B&C, 522FW6.2, 522FW6.7, and legal grant documents.

Finding 4. Some field trials on Fish and Wildlife Areas in Indiana are having a negative impact on fish and wildlife habitat.

At Glendale horses are trampling and denuding vegetation along trails and other heavy use areas. This effect is especially severe in wet areas where the ground cover vegetation is completely denuded in many locations. Severe erosion problems are occurring on slopes where clay soil is eroding directly into many small streams. These stream beds are being smothered by layers of sediment. These streams empty directly into Dogwood Lake, a 1400 acre fishing lake that was constructed on lands purchased with Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration funds and also constructed with Sport Fish Restoration funds. Heavy rains and runoff lead to turbidity, siltation, and sedimentation in Dogwood Lake, which degrades the aquatic habitat. This is a violation of State water pollution laws and regulations, Indiana Code 13-7-1-26, 13-7-1-7, 13-7-4-1, 13-1-3-8 and the Indiana Administrative Code 2-1-6.



Horses are trampling and denuding vegetation along trails and other heavy use areas.



Horse use during pointing dog field trials is trampling vegetation and causing severe erosion on slopes where clay soil is washing directly into many small streams.



Eroded soils are washing down many small streams that empty directly into Dogwood Lake. The resulting turbidity and siltation degrades this 1400 acre fishing lake constructed with Sport Fish Restoration funds. It also violates State water pollution laws and regulations, and the Indiana Administrative Code.

Bird dog and Rabbit dog field trials can currently be scheduled at Fish and Wildlife Areas during both the spring and fall seasons, for nearly 6 months of the year. Retriever and Versatile dog field trials can currently be scheduled from February 1 to early November, for over 8 months of the year. DNR staff must spend time on activities in support of these field trial events. Activities that modify the habitat for the benefit of conducting field trials without a wildlife management related need have a negative impact on wildlife habitat. Also included are time spent on planning and coordination activities, responding to problems and emergencies during the events, trash pick up, and end of trial clean up and repair. In addition, field trials limit when critical habitat management work such as controlled burning can be accomplished. Both the time lost working on field trial support and the limitations imposed on habitat management by the presence of the trials have a negative impact on fish and wildlife habitat. The “time cost” factor reduces time that DNR staff can spend on critical habitat management work and limits accomplishments under their Federal funded grants for fish and wildlife management, thus adversely affecting fish and wildlife habitat.

Thus, in regard to the above finding, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the State are not in compliance with Sections 1 and 2 of the Wildlife Restoration Act, 50CFR80.5, 50CFR80.13, 50CFR80.14, 50CFR80.18, 43CFR12.71(b), 521FW1.6, 522FW6.2, 522FW6.7, and legal grant documents.

At Winamac, the size of the area used for the field test was much smaller than the size of the area used for the field trial at Glendale. Only the two judges were on horses, there were fewer participants, the trial was limited to two days, the area used for the trial was about 40 to 60 acres in contrast to 5000 acres at Glendale, and there were no stream crossings or grooming of the habitat for the field test. Consequently, there were no apparent adverse impacts to fish and wildlife habitat from the field test.

Finding 5. Some field trials at Fish and Wildlife Areas in Indiana interfere with wildlife feeding, resting, breeding, and other life activities.

Noise and disturbances created by dogs, horses, people, and vehicles associated with extensive field trial activities cause disturbances to wildlife in general over an extended period of time. This includes but is not limited to disturbances in pre-breeding, breeding, and feeding situations. The nature of field trials, especially horseback field trials, dogs followed by horses both on and off trails, is not conducive to meeting wildlife needs.

Wild turkeys are especially sensitive to persistent disturbances. The “Atlas of Breeding Birds of Indiana” by Castrale, Hopkins, and Keller (1998) lists the breeding dates for wild turkey as 1 April to 31 July. The start date appears to be a conservative one, at least in southern Indiana, since members of the review team observed a strutting tom turkey with his tail fanned courting a hen turkey early on the morning of March 23, 2000, at Glendale Fish and Wildlife Area. In all likelihood, this was not the first occurrence of such activity in March. Field trials and wild turkey breeding, nesting, and rearing activity are undoubtedly in conflict during at least two weeks in March and through all of April, May, June, and July.

“For the purpose of this Act the term ‘wildlife restoration project’ shall.....include the selection, restoration, rehabilitation, and improvement of areas of land or water adapted as feeding, resting, or breeding places for wildlife.....”

Mammals nesting on the ground in grassy areas, such as the cottontail rabbit, would be especially subject to disturbance during their nesting and rearing season. According to the “Mammals of the Great Lakes Region” by Burt (1957) rabbits become sexually active as early as January, with young of the first litter being born in March or April. According to the “Mammals of Indiana” by Mumford and Whitaker (1982) rabbits become sexually active as early as January and remain so as late as October. This reference states that young rabbits have been found in the nest as early as January 8 at Brookville in

southeastern Indiana, which is about the same latitude as Glendale. Young rabbits spend about two weeks in their nest during which time they are blind, naked, immobile, and depend on suckling their mother to survive. Field trials and cottontail rabbit breeding, nesting, and rearing activity are probably in conflict during the entire field trial season.

Mammals nesting on the ground in grassy areas, such as the cottontail rabbit, would be especially subject to disturbance during their nesting and rearing season.

Birds nesting in grassy areas on the ground, such as the bobwhite quail, or in low shrubs, would be especially subject to disturbances during their nesting period. The “Atlas of Breeding Birds of Indiana” lists the breeding dates for bobwhite quail as 15 April through 31 July. Wild bobwhite quail are subject to being pointed and flushed repeatedly both during the spring and fall field trial season. This would in effect push them off their nests during the spring field trial season and break up coveys during the fall season.

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Extensive numbers of domestic pen reared quail are stocked for field trials. This totals about 1200 per year at Glendale and about 800 per year at Winamac, which could equal or exceed the number of wild birds in some locations on the area. Stocked birds used for field tests are shot and retrieved as part of the training exercise, but stocked birds are just flushed and left in the field for field trials. DNR Wildlife biologists believe that quail stocked during the spring field trial season inter-mix and disrupt social patterns of wild quail attempting to set up territories, select mates, and begin breeding activities. The possibility for introducing diseases and undesirable genetic traits through breeding between domestic and wild quail also exists. DNR wildlife biologists also believe that stocking extensive numbers of domestic quail that lack the wildness of wild birds attracts extra predators from surrounding areas which stay and hunt wild birds after the domestic birds have been eliminated. This would further impact existing quail populations.

Wild quail populations on the Fish and Wildlife Areas were significantly reduced by hard winters in the 1970's, with subsequent reductions in numbers of wild birds harvested in the fall. At both Glendale and Winamac, the populations have never recovered to former population levels. Biologists report, however, that quail populations have recovered in the farm lands south of Winamac. Also, spring call counts and harvest of wild quail on Winamac is highest in the northern one-third of the area where there are no field trials or stocking of domestic birds, even though the habitat is of lower quality. DNR wildlife biologists believe there is a link between the stocking of the domestic quail and the failure of wild populations to recover to their former population levels.

Field trials and bobwhite breeding, nesting, and rearing activity are undoubtedly in conflict

at least from April 15 through the end of July. The conflict results from both the direct activity associated with field trials plus the effects of stocking large numbers of domestic quail on top of reduced wild populations.

There are also non-game ground nesting birds, such as the eastern meadowlark, that would be subject to disturbance from field trials during their breeding, nesting, and rearing season. The “Atlas of Breeding Birds of Indiana” list the breeding dates for the eastern meadowlark as 1 May - 31 July. It also states the eastern meadowlark has suffered population declines due to the loss and degradation of habitat and due to nesting losses from mowing. The Eastern Meadowlark is listed as a species of management concern by the Fish and Wildlife Service in the north-central states.

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At Winamac, as previously stated, the size of the area, the duration of the test, and the use of horses were all limited. It was not readily discernible whether or not there was interference between the field test activities and wildlife resting, feeding, breeding, or other life activities.

Finding 6. The DNR is providing preferential treatment for Field Trial Organizations by providing services of material value that only benefit those organizations and their individual members. This preferential treatment is occurring at some Fish and Wildlife Areas in Indiana that have been purchased, developed, and /or managed with Federal Aid funds.

The DNR provides Field Trial Clubhouses for exclusive use by Field Trial Organizations and their members. Clubhouses and associated facilities were constructed and maintained with license dollars or state tax dollars yet are not available to the general public. They can not even be used by intended beneficiaries of the areas such as by hunting clubs for meetings, by school children or university students during educational activities, or by boy or girl scouts during educational activities. Many of the field trial participants who have use of the Clubhouses are not state residents. A survey of license plates at the Clubhouse at Glendale showed licenses from Alabama (3), Georgia, Illinois (2), Kentucky (2), Michigan, Mississippi (2), North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, but none from Indiana.